

#### 4 Intellectual Life of the Middle Ages.

schools, of Arnold of Brescia attacking the sham Christianity of the hierarchy. It might be heroic, but it was a forlorn hope. Every effort to emancipate the mind from the thralls of tradition, every effort, rational and irrational, cleric and lay alike, dashed in pieces on the rock of prejudice, ignorance, pretension, assumption, which put on the guise of truth, and claimed the unquestioning submission of intellect and conscience. There was indeed some independent thinking, within certain limits, as the recurring controversies of the Middle Ages show. A speculative tendency of a kind was active enough. Some strong mind like that of Erigena or Abelard would, too, occasionally refuse to submit to current dogmas, and defend new or singular opinions with much acuteness and some independence. Erigena and Ratramnus, for instance, challenged the dogma of transubstantiation, protested against materialistic views of the Sacrament. But this mental activity as represented by the schoolmen, tended to degenerate into mere quibbling about words or trivialities. It was artificial, formal, and often childish. Moreover, it was narrowed by certain defined limits which no thinker might overstep. The truth of the received system was assumed, and the reason was not free to apply itself to the untrammelled search after truth. To doubt was to be damned in regard to the received verities of faith or philosophy. "There was, indeed," says Mr R. L. Poole, "never a time when the life of Christendom was so confined within the hard shell of its dogmatic system that there was no room left for individual liberty of opinion. A ferment of thought is continually betrayed beneath these forms; there are even indications of a state of opinion antagonistic to the Church itself. . . . Such efforts until we approach the border line of modern history were invariably disappointed. They rarely excited even a momentary influence over a wide circle." The age, in truth, achieved some progress in political speculation, as we have seen in a previous chapter. The struggle between emperor and pope, the discussion of their respective spheres of jurisdiction, the conflict of the conceptions of Church and State, produced notable results in the domain of political theory. The views of successive writers show progress, and reach even a revolutionary climax in a Marsilio of Padua. But wherever the